

connecting REDMOND

Transportation Master Plan

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This chapter of the Transportation Master Plan addresses Redmond's role in regional infrastructure and regional policymaking.

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Introduction

This Transportation Master Plan addresses transportation facilities and services that are within Redmond and within Redmond's jurisdiction. However, the TMP is also designed to strengthen regional partnerships.

Redmond plays a two-part transportation role in the Puget Sound Region.

First, Redmond's transportation facilities are part of the regional travel network. Redmond's streets carry regional pass-through traffic in addition to local circulation and access traffic. The draft TMP addresses the role the City's transportation infrastructure will play in serving the regional travel demand markets.

Second, Redmond is involved in transportation policy-making through a variety of settings – standing committees (e.g., Eastside Transportation Partnership), task forces (e.g., 405 Task Force) and representation on major regional bodies (King County Metro, PSRC, etc.). The draft TMP establishes policies and preferences for the City to advocate in these regional settings.

Redmond Streets in the Regional Transportation Network

Redmond's transportation facilities are part of a regional network of roads, streets, transit routes and other infrastructure and services. The portion of the regional system that is located within Redmond is important not only to the citizens of Redmond, but also to regional travelers and to neighboring jurisdictions.

The fact that Redmond's infrastructure has a role to play in meeting the regional mobility challenge has been a major consideration guiding the development of this Transportation Master Plan. This is most apparent in the mode plans of Chapter 5.

This regional role must, however, be balanced with the City's Comprehensive Plan objectives for community character, quality of life, neighborhood preservation and economic vitality.

Redmond believes that most regional travel should be carried on the regional network of state highways and freeways. To the extent that development in the region, and particularly in eastern King County, exceeds capacity of the regional road network, traffic will be diverted onto local streets. Because Redmond is located along the eastern urban growth boundary, it is especially impacted by this pass-through traffic.

Streets in Redmond that are significantly impacted by regional traffic include Union Hill Road, Avondale Road, Bel-Red Road, West Lake Sammamish Parkway NE, 148th Avenue NE, Willows Road, and many of the downtown streets. Most of these streets have residential neighborhoods along them or nearby, and many of them pass through important local commercial areas.

This Transportation Master Plan includes projects that are intended to carry significant pass-through traffic, including most notably the Bear Creek Parkway Extension. However, the City does not believe it can or should mitigate continued rural and exurban growth by expanding local streets to make up for insufficient capacity in the regional roadways, at the expense of local community character and quality of life.

For this reason, Chapter 5 includes a "build-out" Thoroughfare Plan with maximum lanes for each corridor beyond which the local street system will not be widened.

Two key regional corridor issues affecting Redmond are:

- Regional Access to Overlake Center. The primary routes for regional travel to and from the Overlake area should be I-405 and SR 520. While local streets in Redmond and Bellevue always will play an important role in this context, long trips from elsewhere in the region should be accommodated primarily in the state highway corridors. Local streets that are currently heavily impacted by such regional travel will not be widened beyond what is appropriate given their community context. These include 148th Avenue NE, 140th Avenue NE, Bel-Red Road, Old Redmond Road, and West Lake Sammamish Parkway NE.
- Regional Pass-Through Traffic from Eastern King County. Redmond cannot avoid the legacy of the radial roadway network it has inherited from earlier decades (nor does it wish to). However, the primary corridors for east-west regional travel in this part of the region should be SR 522, SR 520 and I-90. Again, the local streets that are heavily impacted by such regional traffic will not be widened beyond what is appropriate given their community context. These include NE 124th Street, NE 116th Street, Avondale Road, Union Hill Road, Old Redmond Road, and the downtown street network.

One of the primary themes of this Transportation Master Plan is the need for a more connected roadway network. A number of projects have been included both in the build-out plan in Chapter 5 and in the funded 2022 plan in Chapter 6 to provide needed connections where there are discontinuities today. Some of these could tend to encourage additional pass-through traffic in Redmond.

However, the City recognizes it cannot wall itself off from regional traffic flows, so the idea that better connectivity is of paramount importance has been given precedence over the impacts of regional pass-through traffic. At the same time, the City will continue to advocate for a better balance between the amount of exurban development being allowed and the regional roadway network require to serve the resulting traffic. Consistent with policy direction established in the City's Comprehensive Plan, the City will not pursue continuous widening of local streets in an attempt to service neverending growth in regional traffic demand.

Finally, the City believes it is imperative that a high capacity transit network be established to connect Eastside cities with each other and with the rest of the region. It will not be possible to avoid worsening congestion by widening roads and streets - whether regional or local.

Redmond and Regional Transportation Policymaking

Redmond recognizes a responsibility to contribute to regional transportation policy development and decision-making.

While regional transportation policy issues have been addressed throughout this Transportation Master Plan, and are especially important in Chapter 5, they have been collected and summarized here to provide a convenient reference for representatives of the City and others serving on regional committees and task forces.

I-405

It is Redmond's policy that I-405 should serve as the principal north-south regional arterial on the Eastside and should be developed as a multimodal corridor.

Redmond is particularly supportive of HOV system development in this corridor. In the future, it will be important to continue improving the functionality of major connecting corridors, including especially the full accommodation of freeway-to-freeway HOV connectivity. As part of this effort, it is important to continue to support the development of a comprehensive, coordinated corridor TDM program that reinforces the multimodal nature of the corridor.

Redmond believes it is essential that additional funding be secured to meet needs in this corridor. Of the \$11 billion in needs identified for I-405, only about \$500 million is currently funded. State and federal funding to close this gap is a priority for the City.

SR 520 (within Redmond)

The design of improvements in the SR520 corridor must not preclude any reasonably foreseeable High Capacity Transit (HCT) scenario. That portion of SR520 that lies within Redmond is the probable corridor for future HCT to and through Redmond.

In the future, the freeway should also provide for the direct connection of HOV facilities in the corridor to the associated transit park and ride facilities. Providing HOV lanes as part of SR520 mainline improvements between interchanges is a good first step. This improvement needs to be complemented by an emphasis on use of TDM techniques to increase commuter awareness and use of alternative commute modes to enhance corridor efficiency.

The eastern terminus of the east side HCT system will be a multimodal transportation facility of regional significance requiring a large footprint for parking as well as direct connections to the freeway and to nearby arterial and collector roadways. SR 520 planning and design should identify and evaluate the most likely locations for a future HCT terminal station.

It is also Redmond's position that the existing Bear Creek Park and Ride lot is not adequate to serve as the future terminal facility at the east end of the HCT corridor. The current Metro park and ride facility is at a minimally-functional location that suffers from low visibility and poor access and, as a result, generates limited demand.

Growth in East King County

Redmond's transportation system is impacted by development in northeastern King County and southeastern Snohomish County. Redmond believes that the travel demand associated with continued residential development east of the City will be difficult to meet and should be addressed concurrent with the permitting of such development.

Future High Capacity Transit network on the Eastside should include a terminal station east of Downtown Redmond for the express purpose of capturing and meeting the needs of travelers before they come onto congested urban roadways. This is addressed in more detail below.

Fully accommodating future east-west traffic flows created by continued residential development in unincorporated King County and Snohomish County requires careful development of multiple east-west regional roadway corridors. SR 520 cannot meet these traffic demands alone.

Once the "nickel project" is completed, SR 520 will essentially be a constrained roadway facility incapable of additional future increases in peak period vehicular capacity. Other parallel state highway corridors must be expanded if additional growth is to be accommodated. This includes both SR 522 and I-90.

Redmond is aware that one of the impacts of rural growth will be increased travel into Redmond that is destined for local shopping, recreation and employment areas. While not all would agree that the City should serve as a shopping destination for rural areas, this is one effect of development in these areas and roadways and other services will be required to respond to the associated travel demand.

Redmond also has accepted a role as the location for some additional employment growth, which again implies transportation demand from rural residential development. Given these impacts, it is important that Redmond support communities to the east in helping identify new and innovative funding to increase the levels of transit service from these areas into Redmond. These needs have been explicitly addressed in Chapter 5.

High Capacity Transit Network

Redmond advocates early development of a High Capacity Network (HCT) linking the Eastside centers and activity areas and connecting them with regional centers throughout the Puget Sound Region.

Redmond also believes that there should be an immediate and ongoing improvement in Eastside regional bus transit services provided through Sound Transit, both to meet current travel demand and also to build transit patronage in preparation for HCT.

This Transportation Master Plan anticipates that a direct HCT connection into Redmond will be under construction within the 2022 horizon of this Plan and will be in service by the end of that period. The City does not believe that continued regional growth can be accommodated on the Eastside beyond levels anticipated by 2022 without at least the key spine corridors of HCT being in place.

Redmond believes that the long-term development of HCT in the Region will require crossings of Lake Washington in both the SR 520 and I-90 corridors. It is imperative that any major changes or improvements to bridge crossings in either corridor must fully anticipate and provide for HCT development.

Redmond will work to support HCT development in both corridors.

Recognizing that HCT may initially connect the Eastside with Seattle through the I-90 corridor, Redmond has anticipated how that spine corridor will have to be located to adequately serve Bellevue and Redmond, as well as other Eastside needs.

The principal requirements in this respect are:

The first HCT spine on the Eastside may come across Lake Washington in the I-90 corridor and connect into Downtown Bellevue. However, the extension of that corridor into Downtown Redmond with a station at Overlake will be as important for regional travel as the connection across the lake into Seattle.

- One potential corridor for HCT connecting Downtown Bellevue and Downtown Redmond is Bel-Red Road. However, HCT must connect directly into Overlake, ideally at the existing NE 40th Street transit center. From that point on, HCT should use the SR 520 corridor. Further, if the development of HCT is located in part through the Bel-Red Road corridor, this must not detract from the regional functionality of this route. The number of local stops must be limited and travel times must be kept short if HCT is to compete effectively with auto travel.
- The City is planning for four primary HCT stations in Redmond: one in the vicinity of 152nd Avenue NE to serve the Overlake Mixed Use Core; one at NE 40th Street, serving Microsoft and other portions of Overlake; one in the Downtown serving its employees, residents, and destinations; and one farther east in SE Redmond to intercept commuters with a major park and ride and multimodal facility. Redmond also anticipates that the most easterly of these stations may also be associated with a nearby maintenance facility.
- Ultimately, over the long term, a north-south HCT corridor linking Issaquah, Redmond and Woodinville will also be needed and should be included in Sound Transit plan development.

With these concepts and principles as a guide, Redmond will work with its neighboring cities and other regional partners to advance the development of the Sound Move Long-Range Plan and Sound Transit Phase II and other similar initiatives.

Redmond recognizes its responsibility to take the lead in planning the transportation facilities and associated land development patterns required for all the HCT stations in Redmond. This may include identifying and protecting rights of way for an HCT corridor and space for station locations.

The City has initiated a planning effort for an HCT station and associated transit-oriented development in Downtown Redmond and an intercept station east of Downtown Redmond. This study, to be completed in 2005, will assess the best corridor for HCT in this area and the resulting best location for the HCT stations.

Redmond is also committed to working closely with Sound Transit as it continues to develop its plans for near-term and long-range HCT improvements.

Metro Transit Services

This Transportation Master Plan places significant reliance on continued growth and improvement in King County Metro transit services. This is not directly within Redmond's ability to control or direct, but will require cooperation and collaboration between Redmond, Metro and other Eastside cities.

Over the life of this Plan (by 2022) transit demand to, from and through Redmond is expected to grow by at least 80% above 2003 levels. Some of the key service improvements needed to respond to this demand are:

- Better frequency of service to Redmond's centers (Downtown and Overlake);
- More direct, less circuitous routes, especially for those routes connecting Eastside centers;
- More direct and frequent internal service between locations within Redmond; and,
- More efficient service design, with less bus time in non-productive lengthy layovers.

These enhancements are described in more detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 7.

Redmond is committed to helping Metro make these improvements. The City has been active in helping to plan and implement the TOD (transit-oriented development) project at the Downtown Park and Ride. This important project should be completed and placed in service as soon as possible.

Redmond also sees a need for improved transit operations in the Overlake core, especially along NE 24th Street, which is a primary commercial street in that area and is not as well-served by local transit routes today as it should be in the future.

Bicycle System

This Transportation Master Plan includes a complete network of long, continuous bicycle corridors (described in Chapter 5). These are important to internal circulation and access within Redmond.

These corridors also will be important for regional bicycling. Some of the key facilities in this respect are:

- Puget Power Trail;
- East Lake Sammamish Trail;
- 520 Corridor Pathway; and,
- Sammamish River Trail.

The City will work with its sister cities and other regional partners to ensure that the Redmond bicycle network is accessible and well-connected to regional facilities and local facilities in neighboring communities.

Other Topics

Redmond will work with its regional partners on a wide range of issues and opportunities, not all of which are fully described in this chapter. Some other key processes and issues include:

- Continuing coordination and cooperation with the City of Bellevue on issues of mutual interest, including Overlake and continuing elements of the BROTS agreement;
- Continued participation in and support to the Eastside Transportation Partnership;
- Continued collaboration with Bellevue and Kirkland and PSRC on development and maintenance of the BKR traffic forecasting model (which was used extensively in development of this Transportation Master Plan);
- Continued coordination with the Puget Sound Regional Council on MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) business and on other initiatives as well (including the Prosperity Partnership);
- Continued coordination and collaboration with other Eastside governments on transportation funding initiatives; and.
- Participation in the PSRC's ongoing research and development regarding transportation pricing.
- > Coordinate with the City of Woodinville and King County on the future Willows Road extension.

8. R E G I O N A L T R A N S P O R T A T I O N

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